

Massachusetts Statewide Community Transportation Coordination Conference May 5, 2015

Advocacy Strategies Panel

“Advocacy” can mean many different things, but this panel focuses on advocacy strategies that help you **access political power to effect change.**

Three panelists:

- Josh Ostroff, Outreach Director, Transportation for Massachusetts – Transportation for Massachusetts is a statewide coalition working to make sure public transport is a great strategy for anyone who wants to use it.
- Carolyn Villers, Executive Director, Massachusetts Senior Action Council – Mass Senior Action Council is a grassroots-led organization to empower seniors on all aspects of their lives, including mobility. They promote seniors being able to stay engaged and continue to contribute to their community.
- Mike Gowing, Selectman from Acton – also serves as Vice Chair of the MAGIC sub-region of the Metropolitan Area Planning Council, on the board and finance audit committee of the Lowell Regional Transit Authority (LRTA), and Chair of the Regional Transportation Advisory Council to the Boston Metropolitan Planning Organization.

Success Stories

- Villers: When the MBTA raised paratransit fares in 2012 from \$2 to \$4 one way, Mass Senior Action’s seniors attended many meetings to make the point that this increase would have a negative impact on the quality of life for seniors on low incomes. Seniors reached out to their legislators. The paratransit fare hikes were not getting media attention, so they staged some direct action/civil disobedience and then got media attention. Ultimately the legislature directed Elder Affairs and the Massachusetts Office on Disability to conduct a study of the impact of the paratransit fare increases. After some additional direct action, the study was released. As a result, the General Manager announced that the fare increase would be rolled back to \$3.
- Ostroff: fears that recent successes are at risk if funding is cut.
- Gowing: Town of Acton started a rail shuttle and will be starting a fixed bus route. In addition, community input in one case led to station design including elevators instead of ramps for people with disabilities.

Advice:

- Gowing shared that it’s key to have CROC:
 - **C**hampion – someone to lead
 - **R**elentless – someone who won’t give up to the no’s
 - **O**pportunities – someone who creates opportunities
 - **C**ollaboration – someone who dialogues and creates relationships
- Gowing also suggested identifying opportunities for small victories to celebrate along the way, while working toward a longer term victory
- Ostroff emphasized the value of using social media. If you want to reach legislators, reach out to an organization that is experienced in legislative advocacy
- Villers noted that advocacy should include the people impacted

In closing, MassMobility staff noted that in addition to the types of advocacy represented on the panel, many stakeholders have also developed strong relationships with their state delegation.